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Book Review: *International Handbook of Research on Children's Literacy, Learning, and Culture*. Kathy Hall, Teresa Cremin, Barbara Comber & Luis Moll. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 584 pages.

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As literacy teachers, scholars, researchers, and teacher educators, we are often limited by our own cultural background, experiences, and learning. The *International Handbook of Research on Children's Literacy, Learning, and Culture* is a powerful tool for expanding the cultural knowledge base and helping us all overcome our own experiential limitations. The skilled editors, shared that the vision for the handbook was to "explore our understandings and future possibilities by bringing together critical reviews of the major theories, methods, and pedagogical advances that have taken place in the past 20 years in the field of literacy research and the primary/elementary school level" (Hall, Cremin, Comber, & Moll, 2013, p. xxvii). The comprehensive handbook is organized into the following three interconnected parts:

- Part 1-Society, culture, and community;
- Part 2-School, culture, and pedagogy;
- Part 3-Teachers, culture, and identity.

The handbook features sixty-eight authors from around the globe. The diverse contributors invite readers to revisit current interpretations and make novel connections as they framed new possibilities and encouraged researchers to pursue innovative and compelling lines of inquiry.

Joining the multimodal text discussion, authors Mackey and Shane (pp. 15-27)

revisit critical multimodal literacies and the roles texts play in the lives of young learners. They observe, a consequence of "the new fluidities of contemporary literacies," is that "the making of *textual* meaning has steadily become a more elaborate enterprise for young learners, who must absorb how to orchestrate an increasing variety of information channels" (p. 15). They share "the idea that human beings not only live *with* language but also *in* language, and in multiple other semiotic modes as well, as we exist in the constant and changing flow of our social interactions" (p. xxviii). A consequence of living *with* and *in* language is the power of political economies of "edutainment" media for children and its impact on early literacy experiences (Nixon & Hately, pp. 28-41).

The authors of this handbook also invite us to revisit the role of time and space in early literacy acquisition and understandings. Catherine Compton-Lilly (pp. 83-95) equates "As fish live in water, we live within time without paying much attention to how temporality informs how we grow, develop, and make sense of our worlds" (p. 83). She presents insights related to temporality from developmental psychology, sociology, and life narrative studies. Her insights draw powerful attention to how young children operate and become literate within rich temporal contexts. Margaret Sheehy (pp. 400-411) continues the focus on context as she uses

geographic analysis to outline the macro processes that shape school literacy practices. She revisits how “When we recognize the complexity of people’s actions as part of entangled relations played out in time, we have no choice but to wrestle, not only with what students and teachers *can* do but also with what they *can’t* do” (p. 400). The spatial turn in literacy studies is also the focus of Mills and Comber’s (pp. 412-426) contribution as they argue that “marginalization is often accomplished spatially” (p. xlvi).

In addition to inviting us to revisit current interpretations of literacy practices, the authors of this handbook help us make novel connections. Curtin & Hall (p. 108-120) as well as Heath (184-200) focus on the connection between brain and culture. They suggest that “one cannot understand human development without also understanding neurobiological development. That people are inextricably biological and cultural historical must be axiomatic, whether one is studying ‘mirror neurons’ or language, literacy, and culture” (xxvii). Rosemberg, Stein, and Alam (pp. 67-82) emphasize the connection between communities and schools as they researched the power of creating ethnographic reading books that invited children to learn conventional information while giving greater importance to local society and culture. Carrington and Dowdall (p. 96-107) relate the powerful relationship between media culture and children’s use of material artifacts in creating lifespaces that provide the transactional space for exploring ideas and developing creative processes. And Jones and Sackelford (p.

388-399) posit the relationship between psychosocial gains and losses associated with particular textual practices. The novel connections presented in the handbook frame new possibilities such as Thomson and Clifton (pp. 54-66) suggestions for featuring school-university collaboration and Reyes and Esteban-Guitart’s (pp. 155-171) encouragement to forge multiple pathways to literacy by honoring students cultural funds of knowledge. The connections also encourage us to pursue innovative and compelling lines of inquiry that will build on this foundational collection of international research on children’s literacy, learning, and culture.

This handbook is especially relevant in today’s culture where “Literacy, in particular, is in the vanguard, for literacy only too frequently is positioned as a proxy for education” (p. xxvii). It can be a valuable tool as we continue to better understand the purposes of literacy teaching and explore what counts as literacy in “new times,” in “participatory culture” where people “believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another” (p. xxvii).

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